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ACTION WHA-00

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE;
HUMAN RIGHTS; MIDEAST

CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

1. "Martin's Kyoto tut-tut"

The leading Globe and Mail editorialized (12/9): "It is unsettling to hear Paul Martin chide the United States on climate change when Canada itself has made so little progress on this explosive issue. Two days ago, the Prime Minister whisked from the campaign trail to a top-level United Nations climate conference in Montreal with an impassioned appeal for a unified front in handling global weather change. Pointedly praising the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse- gas emissions which the United States did not endorse, he told delegates from 189 nations that climate change is already happening, and that the economic and human toll will worsen.... The bravura performance won plaudits from Mr. Martin's listeners. Pity that Canada's record does not match his rhetoric.... Few nations, in fact, are making laudable progress in emission reduction.... Canada has a long way to go before it can start throwing stones. In last

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February's budget, Mr. Martin established a Clean Fund of \$1-billion over five years to reduce emissions. A portion of the federal gas tax goes to municipal green projects in transportation and environmental cleanups. And Ottawa has earmarked \$3.6-billion specifically for climate-change action since 2000. But emissions keep rising. Meanwhile, as Dr. Dobriansky argued, the United States now leads the world in funding climate-change science, with \$2-billion this year - and new legislation includes \$11-billion in incentives for alternative energy. As she politely insisted, the U.S. too is making progress. And Mr. Martin, even in the midst of a campaign whirl, should curtail his self-congratulatory preaching."

2. "Kyoto speech exposes Prime Minister's hypocrisy" Columnist Richard Gwyn commented in the liberal Toronto Star (12/9): "As has been observed, politicians during elections have the same single-mindedness as moose during the rutting season. They will do anything to attain their objective and will allow nothing to stand in their way of attaining it. So it's with a weary sense of futility that I summon up my dwindling supplies of moral outrage to take issue with Prime Minister Paul Martin's comments this week at the United Nations conference on climate change that's being held in Montreal. Still, someone has to do the job. It isn't what Martin said that's the issue. He used the platform to earn himself some headlines by taking a poke at the United States for refusing to sign onto the Kyoto accord. Fully fair. The United States deserves criticism for its political and economic selfishness. Anyway, U.S. politicians will certainly not be shocked or surprised at other politicians bashing them to earn votes back home. It's what Martin didn't say that's the issue. About the substance of climate change insofar as Canada is concerned - this being entirely the result of the actions, and more often the non-actions, of Martin's own government and of the preceding Liberal governments of which he was a senior member - he had nothing to say. We've done nothing about climate change and about global warming except talk. For us to now preach at others is pure hypocrisy. The evidence is unimpeachable.... Worse by far, in the light of Martin's opportunistic moralism, the U.S. has done far better than us. Its rate of emissions is also up, but only by a cumulative 13.3 per cent, roughly half as much as ours.... This doesn't mean that they're right and we're wrong. It means, rather, that we're both

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wrong: the U.S. not to have joined Kyoto and ourselves because we have done so little - really nothing more than some expensive ad campaigns about conservation. Nor is there any prospect of our record improving. Real change would require penalties for polluters.... Of course, the U.S., as the world's biggest polluter, matters in a way that we do not. By rejecting Kyoto, it encourages large developing nations, like China and India, to continue to refuse to join. (By 2025, it's expected that China will become the world's largest emitter of carbon). We, though, are the good guys, the multilateralists, natural conservationists because our terrain is so fragile. On environmental matters, at the very least, we're all those things only in our own

mind...."

HUMAN RIGHTS

3. "The world has lost its human rights champion" Columnist Dan Gardner observed in the nationalist Ottawa Citizen (12/9): "For 10 years, the United Nations office responsible for investigating torture asked the Chinese government for permission to visit prisons in China. For 10 years, the Chinese refused. But in November, a UN investigator was finally allowed into the country and, last Friday, despite attempts by Chinese security officials to obstruct his work, the investigator issued his report. 'The practice of torture, though on the decline,' the investigator concluded, 'remains widespread in China.' The American response to this damning confirmation of what human rights groups have said all along was crucial. The United States is the world's sole superpower. It funds human rights activists. It tracks human rights violations. It can, with a word, put any item at the top of the world's agenda - or, by keeping silent, bury it. So what did the United States have to say now that the United Nations had confirmed the widespread use of torture in what may become the most important country of the 21st century? Pretty much nothing.... The U.S. had moral authority. And that, as much as economic and military power, is what gave it the strength to advance human rights. But no more. Mr. McClellan's boss has profoundly damaged American credibility and today the world is without a strong champion of human rights. What can the Bush administration do to condemn abusive governments? At the first word of criticism, the sneering references begin: Guantanamo. Abu Ghraib. CIA night flights. Ghost prisoners. Secret interrogation

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centres. It's even more difficult for the Bush administration to attack specific practices, as administrations did in the past.... What is missing in this utilitarian calculus are the wider harms inflicted by human rights abuses. How they radicalize prisoners' families, clans and tribes. How they encourage other governments to lower their standards. And perhaps most damaging of all, how they destroy the credibility of the world's greatest defender of human rights. Add these harms into the calculation - and be sure to include China getting off scot-free as the U.S. stays silent - and the conclusion looks quite different."

MIDEAST

4. "Egypt votes"

The centrist Winnipeg Free Press (12/9): "The election that concluded in Egypt on Wednesday was Egypt's largest experiment in democracy, but it was a half-hearted effort urged on a reluctant Egyptian government by the United States and Europe and driven by the force of democratic elections in Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestine Authority. The election was marked by unprecedented violence. The voting, held in three stages, was bloody. Procedures were patently unfair in some parts of the country where the government feared that its main opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood, would do well. More than a dozen people were killed in the course of the election, many more injured by police and government gangs as they tried to vote. Riot police blocked the access of Brotherhood supporters to polling stations. The election also produced unprecedented results. Despite the government's best efforts to ensure that the Muslim Brotherhood would fail at the polls, it scored a remarkable success.... In a truly free and unfettered election, there is no doubt that the Brotherhood would have done much better. There is little doubt as well that, if Egypt continues down the road to democracy, in subsequent elections it will challenge for government. That would be proof of a working democratic process but in almost every other way it would be bad news. The Brotherhood embraces the same vision of Islam as the Iranian mullahs and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda.... Mr. Mubarak should be encouraged not only to pursue democracy, but also to institute the kind of social and economic reforms that will show Egyptian voters that there is a better future under a liberal democracy than there is under an Islamic fundamentalist theocracy. In the Egypt that

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they know today, they have little reason to believe that. Washington, which keeps Mr. Mubarak's government afloat with massive aid, needs to impress on him that more than just political reform is urgently needed."

WILKINS

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